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**Testimony of Cheri Quickmire,
Executive Director, Connecticut Common Cause
To the Human Services Committee
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Senator Moore, Representative Tallarita and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Cheri Quickmire, and I am the Executive Director of Common Cause in Connecticut. Common Cause is a nonpartisan, non-profit citizens' lobby that has worked to improve the way Connecticut's government operates since 1971. Common Cause in Connecticut has a strong history of working to increase transparency in government and advocating for the removal of the corrosive influence of special interest money in government and politics. We have more than 7,500 members and activists in Connecticut.

Common Cause is presenting testimony on **Raised Bill 895 AAC Temporary Family Assistance**. You may know this is not the usual Common Cause testimony but we feel strongly that one important thing about advocating for the removal of the influence of special interest money in our government and politics means that we can focus more clearly on the needs of our most vulnerable residents – not the wants of those who have the biggest megaphone as the result of their ability to pay for influence. RB 895 is an important bill that addresses, as you have heard from the many experts testifying here, the barriers that persist in scaling the summit out of poverty. Maintaining a system that merely pays lip service to needs illustrated here does not adequately assist parents to get jobs they need to take care of their families.

There are important portions of this bill that should be approved. Section 1 (b) will exempt parents from TFA time limits in order to pursue education and training. Being exempt ensures that parents will not use up their eligibility for cash assistance but ends on completion of the approved education or training program.

I personally worked for many years with women on what was then called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF – now TFA) at a time when parents were encouraged to participate in education and training. Many women with whom I worked – no income and in some situations homeless parents with children - completed Associate degrees at Community College and a number went on to Bachelors programs at other institutions. Some completed GED programs and went on to other education or employment opportunities. They increased their ability to meet the needs of their families – employment options, housing, childcare – but upon the advent of “welfare reform” where the focus was almost exclusively on getting a job, the possibility of completing educational programs was severely limited. I submit that this is an issue that needs

to be addressed in order to ensure that low-income parents are able to actively and meaningfully participate in this democracy.

Section 1(c) 2 will encourage parents to work by ending what are referred to as the severe income cliffs. It would permit the parent's income to be reduced more gradually, while still eligible for TFA benefits and I agree should be amended to allow this gradual reduction of benefits to continue for working parents even after extensions.

We urge you to support these provisions as an investment in families moving forward to achieve more beneficial employment and improve their ability to better support their families.